

VZCZCXRO0429
PP RUEHCI
DE RUEHKT #0871/01 2641304
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 211304Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0773
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7127
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 7450
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 2784
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 5491
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 6610
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3235
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 4761
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3660

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 000871

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [IN](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: HOME MINISTER LISTS PRIORITIES TO DASD SCHER

REF: KATHMANDU 741

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Jeffrey A. Moon. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Home Minister Bhim Rawal highlighted to Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) Scher his commitment to improving national and regional security, curbing political violence, resolving the most contentious peace process issues with the Maoists, and upholding human rights. In a meeting with the Home Minister on September 17, DASD told Rawal he has one of the most important jobs in Nepal and commended him for recognizing and working to solve specific security and political challenges. He and the Charge d'Affaires commended the Home Minister for addressing abuses in an effort to end impunity. DASD said Nepal needs political leadership and each side needs to adhere to agreements -- including the discharge of disqualified Maoist combatants from the cantonments and the integration and rehabilitation of the other Maoist combatants. End summary.

Special Security Plan

¶2. (C) Home Minister Bhim Rawal, in a meeting with DASD Scher on September 17, explained the special security program he introduced in late July (reftel) to stabilize law and order, end impunity, and protect human rights. Rawal described the five components of the security plan:

- To counter serious crimes like abduction, trafficking in persons, narcotics and arms trade.
- To improve safety in the capital, including wide-scale arrests of gang leaders.
- To disarm 109 armed groups operating in the eastern Terai, eastern hills, and mid-western hills.
- To prevent the closure of highways and essential services during "bandhs," widely enforced political strikes.
- To build awareness among the civil service, media and general public about the law.

¶3. (C) The Home Minister highlighted the interception of several small explosive devices in Kathmandu over the past several weeks as a result of increased attention to security. He commented on the success of his plan: security forces have been mobilized, highway patrols and traffic checks have increased, and a half dozen training conferences have been organized across the country for security personnel and

district officers. The cabinet has approved 15,000 additional Nepal Police and Armed Police Force as part of the long-term goal.

Political Violence

14. (C) Common crime and political upheaval are the two threats to Nepal's security. The CDA said bandhs, the destruction of property, and the Maoists' recent protest method of flying black flags and throwing stones at cabinet ministers are examples of "politics of vandalism." Rawal said he would like to separate political and criminal activities, but they are intertwined. He hopes enforcing the law would force politicians to distance themselves from crime. Rawal noted he has refused to intervene on behalf of political persons arrested for offenses -- a practice rampant among previous Home Ministers. The CDA, adding to DASD's encouragement of Rawal, said he is pleased the Home Minister is addressing these issues.

Maoists

15. (C) The Home Minister stressed he was trying to create an atmosphere conducive to keeping the Maoists engaged in the peace process. The Maoist leaders have assured Rawal they will stop their party members from throwing stones at cabinet ministers and other forms of violent protest. Rawal said he was hopeful a recent round of political meetings would be valuable because the Maoist leaders were making overtures for consensus -- even reaching out to the Prime Minister despite the Maoists' boycott of parliamentary proceedings. Rawal was

KATHMANDU 00000871 002 OF 003

optimistic the Maoists would reach an agreement with the other parties, but he also questioned the Maoists' internal statements to be prepared for a possible renewed insurgency. Why would they risk radicalizing their cadres to a point that would not be easy to control if they were truly committed to the peace process? Rawal said the Maoists would have to prove their commitment to peace through actions, not words. Rawal said the GON needs close cooperation "from all friends," particularly the United States and international community, to push the Maoists and help the political parties reach consensus. He said informal meetings to encourage the parties to solve their issues in a democratic manner have helped in the past. Some of these meetings took place "outside the country" (a reference to Indian involvement) and were beneficial.

Nepal Army

16. (C) Rawal was adamant that there is no disagreement regarding civilian control of the Nepal Army (NA). He said all of the parties agree on the importance of civilian control, but the Maoists managed to obscure this fact with the controversy over the dismissal of the former Chief of Army Staff. Rawal expressed confidence the NA -- a professional, obedient, and apolitical army -- is committed to civilian authority. He conveyed frustration toward the NA's continued confinement to barracks. He stated the GON must complete the peace process and then "immediately" release the NA so it can address the threat of cross-border and other armed groups trying to destroy "communal harmony." (Note: The Armed Police Force currently serves as Nepal's counter-insurgent organization, but many observers believe the NA is better trained for this role. End note.)

Terai, Terrorism and Regional Security

17. (C) Rawal told DASD the GON could not easily "keep tabs" on groups in the Terai and in rural areas, and criminals could cross into India for smuggling and "training" without difficulty. The most dangerous activities in the Terai are extortion and abduction of businessmen for "economic advantage," according to Rawal. He said small arms also threaten security. The GON has requested the Indian

authorities look into cross-border groups. Pointing to the attack on hotels in Mumbai in November 2008 and Nepal's open border with India, Rawal declared India has its own interest in regional security. The Home Minister said there is no concrete evidence that international terrorist organizations operate in Nepal, but he could not rule it out. He suggested the armed groups in the Terai could align themselves with international terrorist organizations if security forces do not control them now. He noted a small group in the western Terai district of Kailali is already calling itself "al-Qa ida". (Comment: This group has no apparent connection or ideological allegiance to al-Qa ida. End comment.) DASD referred to the tribal areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan and -- alluding to the limited reach of the GON in the Nepalese countryside -- emphasized that having eliminating areas is essential to regional security.

Committed to Human Rights

18. (C) The Home Minister underscored and later reiterated his commitment to human rights. He said he has clearly instructed security personnel to honor a code of conduct and abide by international standards of human rights. Rawal stressed the security forces should respect human rights even during special security operations.

Comment

19. (C) Bhim Rawal, who has expressed his disapproval of a political structure set up to reward "self-aggrandizement" rather than working for the people, is one of the few politicians taking concrete actions to improve national security. Despite initial mixed reactions toward Rawal's special security plan, there has been a noticeable crackdown on crime, particularly in the capital and in the eastern

KATHMANDU 00000871 003 OF 003

Terai.
MOON